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ACROSS THE PAGES . . .

CHRISTMAS, 1941—the setting, the famous Catalonian pilgrimage, Montserrat. It was here Dr. Carla Zawisch found his priceless gem—the real joy for mankind in Christ's birth on earth. Dr. Zawisch shares her experience with you in "Christmas on Montserrat."

THE PRINCESS WORE GOLDEN SLIPPERS . . . yes, the Punjabi Princess and her daughters whom Sister Alma Julia visited not long ago. Read about it in her story "—And Golden Slippers."

"STRAIGHTEN THE CHILD" is simply the literal translation of the word "orthopedics." As a specialty, this branch of medicine is not yet existent in India. But not for lack of suitable cases—explains Sister Elise Wijnen, M.D.

IN THE U.S.A. Ram Nath might have been a big business man, an engineer, or perhaps a bank president. As a good Hindu in India he can never hope to be anything but a sweeper. But this does not prevent him from using his talents for Holy Family Hospital. Sister M. Dolores tells the story.

OUR CHRISTMAS COVER is by Carolyn O'Brien of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Baltimore, Md.

YOUR WILL . . . . .

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The Motherhouse and Novitiate are located in Fox Chase, Philadelphia, Pa. There is also a House of Studies in Brookland, Washington, D.C., and Houses of Postulate in England and Holland.

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"So He Became A Little Child . . ."

Christmas is a feast all love—the most astounding, most complete, and yet most human and helpless sort of love. In the mystery of Christmas, God seems so anxious, so eager, to warm His weary, aching children with the great fire of His love, He will go to any length to do it. He has taken our measure; He has laid Himself upon our human form, and He knows. And so, knowing and loving, He has become one with us, even with our weakness—a little Child.

That is the wonder of Christmas — God become a Child — completely human and close to us.

Even the most lovable and unpretentious of saints frighten us at times. But there is nothing to fear and make us shy and afraid to stand close and look, at Bethlehem. It is all very simple and very human—a man, a woman, a baby, a crude shelter, an ox and an ass, and later, some shepherds—ordinary men, who gaped and stared, all the while adoring in their hearts the mystery of the Child.

When God came down, man's love to win,
He knew man's heart so hard with sin
That all the glory of His grace
Would leave a frown on Pilate's face.

But, since the time of Adam's fall,
Men sometimes gave to weak and small
A simple love and undefiled—
So He became a little Child.

Of course the glory is there—but hidden. And for once the extraordinary wonder of the ordinary—of humanness, even of weakness, lowliness, poverty—is revealed in the Word Made Flesh. God has become man, so very much man—not a wise man, not a beautiful man, not a strong man—but a little Child. With infant hands and eyes and heart He welcomes His creatures, all His ordinary creatures who are weary and anxious and burdened with petty, prosaic human cares.

He welcomes us, every one—the mother who worries about meat and butter, the clerk without a future, the backward child who cannot read, the school girl with the runny nose, women with sculptured hands who pour, women with knobby hands who scrub, those who know better and those who do not, those who have and those who have not, those who love Him ever so much and those who love Him ever so little, the certain, the uncertain, the strong, the weak, the timid, the bold. The whole litany of His creatures—He welcomes us all and makes us feel at home. We can push and jostle and crowd each other to see. We can even sing a bit if we like, and no matter if our notes fall sour and flat. And if we are very sad, we can cry. The Word Made Flesh—real flesh like our flesh—understands. And the human cares and wants and longings of human hearts find warmth and peace and love in His heart—human and divine.

Through the Christmas of the years He comes for all mankind—for those who know Him and for those who do not. And for these last we hear the sadness in His baby cry—as He comes to draw all men into the living fire of Eternal Love—Himself.

Christmas on Montserrat

by

CARLA ZAWISCH, M.D.

It was Christmas Eve of 1941. Three months ago I had escaped from war-torn France and found a haven in hospitable Barcelona. But still I was a stranger in a charming but foreign city, and on that Christmas Eve I felt as lonely as the proverbial stray dog. Fortunately I had a laboratory and a microscope and that seemed to be just the right thing to make me forget.

So it was afternoon when I came home—and a rather cold and dreary sort of home I expected it to be for the rest of the day! What I found instead, was the loveliest Christmas present I ever had. It was an invitation from the Most Reverend Abbot of Montserrat, to spend Christmas as his guest on the sacred Mountain. Spanish hospitality—so true and so delicate!

There was but one train left, an evening train which would be overcrowded, because Christmas Eve on Montserrat is the dream of every Barcelonese. And trains were few and slow in those days, fuel was scarce in a Spain just recovering from her own miseries amidst a world at war. But, blissfully ignorant of the police regulations which forbade me as a foreigner to travel farther than a few miles without a special permit, I made haste. Never mind dinner, I had to stand in line for my ticket.

Slowly the train crawled through the night. Rattling and non-too-clean windows screened off effectively the loveliness outside, the winding valley of the Llobregat, the small historic mountain river so dear to the heart of every Catalonian. On and on the train crawled, stopping interminably time and again at what seemed just a few grey and battered stone houses and then puffing along. It was growing late; would we never arrive?

At last the passengers began to grope for their things and I understood that we had to get off. Nothing could be seen in the darkness but a vague building, which proved to be the head station of the funicular for the ascent to Montserrat —a flimsy cabin swinging on a wire-rope over the abyss, lights within, darkness without, one could just as well swing along to another planet and not even know. It stopped swinging after a time. We stepped out and there were winding stairs. Up and up, and still up in what seemed a kind of tower, but what in the light of the day proved to be the staircase of the principal hotel.

At last a whiff of sharp, cold mountain air—and I gave the gasp of my life! I stood on a high mountain platform. Huge buildings loomed to the right, and before me were the grey shadows of enormous peaks, sharp and pointed like the teeth of a saw. And above, the dark blue velvet of the Catalonian night with the diamond glitter of millions of stars. That was Montserrat, the "saw-mountain" with its jagged silhouette, old and silent against the silent Christmas night; Montserrat, the queenly throne of the Virgin for ages and ages; the holy mountain where saints and kings and sinners and humble pilgrims had knelt at her feet, where Benedictine monks had lived and sung the praise of God.

But there was no time to look backward into the centuries. It was Christmas night and very late at that—Matins must have begun long ago.

I entered the solemn basilica. It was full to overflowing. And over the silent fervor of the many floated the familiar Gregorian chant which tonight would be sung all over the earth wherever Benedictine liturgy was celebrated. "Puer natus est nobis" . . . Once more I felt at peace because I was at home. All around the world would go the rejoicing, this night of all nights, and all around the world Mother and Child would be hailed, and wherever their praise was sung, there was home indeed.

And there in the semi-darkness above the altar, not yet illumined by the full blast of the lights for High Mass, was her image, the ancient black statue of the Virgin with the Child which had radiated love and grace over Catalonia and over Spain and Christian Europe for ever so many centuries. The shrine where Catholic Spain had poured her jubilant thanksgivings for the final and glorious victory over the Moors at Granâda; where St. Ignatius had hung up his sword for good and held his knight's vigil before retiring to Manresa; where St. Peter Nolasco had received from the Virgin the mission to found the Order of Our Lady of Mercy for the liberation of Christian slaves; where Brother Bernardo Boil, Benedictine monk of Montserrat, had knelt to take his leave from the Virgin before sailing with Christopher Columbus on his second voyage, to become the first missionary in far-off future America; where kings and princes of many nations had laid their wealth at the Virgin's feet.

She was there with the eternal smile of Motherhood on her dark countenance; dark from the smoke of the millions of candles and oil

lamps burned before her during twelve centuries, some say; dark from the blackness of age or of the wood itself from which St. Luke had sculptured the Image, say the others. Was it indeed St. James, the great Apostle of Spain, who had received it from St. Luke and brought it to the land of his mission? Legends, certainly—but rooted in a deep and loving faith.

Matins had ended with the solemn prayer chanted by the Abbot from his throne. And now this Mystery began in the resplendent basilica. "Dominus dixit ad me, Filius meus es tu, hodie genui te—" the eternal mystery of Christ proceeding from the Father projected into time and space by His birth in the flesh from the Virgin. And the Gloria broke out under the Catalonian sky as it broke forth from the skies that night at Bethlehem, not far away, just across the Mediterranean on its opposite shore. How near it was. How near and homely the simple narrative of St. Luke which the Deacon in his splendid robes sang from the altar. The simple fact that Jesus was born in a silent night at Bethlehem while the world held its breath—and how then night was night no more.

The hush of the Consecration fell on the worshippers. Softly the organ played: "Silent Night . . ." That song born somewhere in the Austrian mountains, simple as the shepherds and peasants who were first to adore the Child in His Crib, accompanied His rebirth on the altar, as it seems to do now everywhere on earth. The universality of this simple tune, is it not the expression of the fact that those who are simple, who are nearest to God's creatures, to forest and field, to birds and sheep and cattle, are the most ready to enter the shrine of God's mysteries? Why does the Virgin always choose forest and field and mountain top—with a preference for the mountains!—when she manifests herself to man? Why is it always the simple folks, peasants and shepherds who receive these manifestations, from which new grace is poured over the world and the great pilgrimages arise—Montserrat and Lourdes and Guadalupe and La Sallette and lastly Fatima.

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

A Child is born in Bethlehem, alleluia
Glad tidings for Jerusalem, alleluia.

O come adore as angels, sing, alleluia
And give our hearts to Christ our King, alleluia.

Then sing we high and sing we low, alleluia
Benedicamus Domino, alleluia, alleluia!

And all hearts were uplifted that night on Montserrat, in that vast and solemn church filled to the last corner. It lasted a long time until all those thousands had passed before the Communion rail to receive once more the Child. And when at last I left the church after Lauds had been sung, I knew only one thing: the birth of Christ was and is the only real joy in this world.

But I came back that very night, after a light refreshment in the restaurant, opened until the small hours of the morning to the joyous and festive crowds. I came back to the church, now dim and filled with the whispers of low Masses being said at every altar by the monks. And I paid my private visit to the Virgin of Montserrat. I went up to the "camerôn", or little chamber, in which the statue stands high above the altar and where everyone has free access to kneel directly at her feet. I told her many things and thanked her for many more. And then I sat for a while in the wide court at the fountain under an evergreen tree, with the jagged peaks dim before me in the night and the sparkling sky above.

The morning revealed the full glory of the place—the gigantic rocks which rise to a height of well-nigh four thousand feet, dove-grey against a resplendent blue sky. From the platform where the monastery with the basilica and a number of vast hostelries for the pilgrims stand, one single and rather narrow road, hewn out of the rock, winds down in long slopes to the valley. A small rack-and-pinion railway climbs up at the same side from Monistrol, a little town near Manresa. And then there is the funicular or elevator by which I had come. Besides this there are only mountain footpaths. And what a splendid view! The brown and purple valley of the Llobregat far beneath; beyond, the entire landscape unrolling like a map spread at one's feet, with far away Barcelona like a shadow, and a brilliant blue rim—the Mediterranean. Turning to the north on the mountain road one sees another misty, blue and grey shadow-line limiting the horizon—the Pyrenees. As the crow flies it cannot be more than fifty miles to Lourdes. And my heart greets poor France in her bondage on the other side of the great mountain barrier.

A little down the deep slope of the mountain lies "La Cueva", the grotto where the sacred Image was said to have been hidden from the Moors and miraculously found again by shepherds in 880 A.D. This is the birth year of Montserrat as a site of Benedictine worship under the auspices of the Virgin. But before that? Was not Montserrat perhaps the legendary Montsalvage, the high castle which held the Holy Grail? So it has been said time and again. The fact is that only Christian hermits lived in the rocky wilderness centuries before. But after this

year of 880 the Mountain became alive. Thousands and thousands came as pilgrims, some on mules but most on foot, on steep and dangerous paths. Many came barefoot for penitence, some even on their knees; they arrived bleeding and exhausted and the monks tended their bodies and cleansed their souls. A beautiful church and abbey arose, burned down, was built again. Treasures from the wealthy and mighty of the earth adorned the Queen of Heavens, thousands of silver and golden lamps burned fragrant oil before her. The monks served her well and spread religious life and Benedictine culture.

Vicissitudes of many kinds befell Montserrat. But the greatest was the Napoleonic war, when monastery and church, priceless library and treasury, were destroyed by fire and looted by the French armies. Ruins of the ancient buildings are still to be seen everywhere. The monastery and basilica were rebuilt once more. But the Catalonians never forgot the injury; up to this day the French are not much more popular than they were after the ransacking of the national sanctuary. This love and pride of Catalonia for Montserrat is so deeply rooted that not even the red hordes of the Civil War dared lay hands on it, while they destroyed the churches of Barcelona by pick and axe, fire and dynamite.

Montserrat was made a sanatorium for tuberculosis; the sacred Image was hidden and only two monks held the secret. Many of them suffered martyrdom in those days.

Today Montserrat is again as alive as ever and has lost none of its appeal. And in those Christmas days I wandered over those rocky heights, among evergreen bushes powdered with snow at times, when a sharp wind blew from the Pyrenees, or when they smiled with little white blossoms under a blazing mountain sun. I found rest and peace and I was grateful and happy. And when at last the little elevator cabin, swinging on its long wire rope, carried me down again to the curiously brown and grayish green valley and on to everyday life, I had the impression that I carried with me a priceless hidden gem. When I looked at it to find out what it was, I saw that it was that very thought which had dawned on me that Christmas night: the only real, great joy for mankind is, that Christ was born on earth. And this gem rested in a particularly gorgeous setting, so that it can never get lost or be overlooked anymore. And this setting is Montserrat.

"Straighten the Child"

by

Sister M. Elise Wijnen, S.C.M.M., M.D.

Orthopedics, as a specialty, does not exist in India . . . But not for lack of suitable cases!

Medical terms, like many old words derived from Greek and Latin, are most interesting. The word "operation" for instance, really means "work" and a "midwife" is a "wise woman". Likewise the word "diabetes" means "syphon", because the kidneys let sugar through, and "lunatic" means "moonstruck". So also there is a specialty called "orthopedics", which means literally "straighten the child", although it is by no means limited to the diseases of childhood. It has to do with the correction and cure of bone deformities and injuries, including in its field also the restoration of muscles, tendons, joints, etc.

This specialty is an offshoot of surgery, although it overlaps into medicine and pediatrics as well. Its implements are not only the scalpel, but also ropes and pulleys, plaster of Paris, splints and braces, and most of all, long stretches of time. Cure in orthopedic circles is measured in months and years, not in days and weeks.

The last fifty years have seen great improvements and developments in this specialty. Delicate surgical operations, ingenious exercises and manipulations, and all the modern armamentarium of X-ray, ultra-violet light, diathermy, hydrotherapy, etc. have raised its percentage of success to an undreamed of level. Compare what can be done for victims of infantile paralysis nowadays with the grim future that used to be theirs half a century ago. It is safe to predict that all but a small number of such patients will walk again and probably run and dance as well. But orthopedic care requires a lot from the patients as well as from the doctors. Willing cooperation on the one hand, and highly specialized training on the other, are the conditions for success.

Orthopedics, as a specialty, does not exist in India. A few surgeons in the largest towns may have some training and experience in this field, but the country as a whole knows nothing of the marvelous achievements of modern

orthopedics. This is not for lack of suitable cases! Cripples of all types and descriptions abound in India. You will meet them in any sizable town, generally as beggars, sporting their deformities in the public eye, making a fair living out of their handicaps.

Most peculiar of all are the forms of locomotion these cripples adopt. One will move around by wriggling his hips, while his legs remain crossed over each other in front of him. Another swings his body forward from his arms, like a monkey in a tree. Some roll over and over, others crawl on their stomachs, and many use hands and knees. All have this in common: they might have been cured, or at least helped considerably by early, adequate and prolonged orthopedic care. As it is, they are helpless and hopeless cripples, swelling the army of beggars and paupers of India.

The causes of bone deformity are many, but the commonest of them are tuberculosis of the bones, infections, accidents and burns, infantile paralysis and congenital deformities. Owing to constant intermarriage between families and within castes, these last are simply legion. One of the easiest to correct, the clubfoot, can be met daily in the streets of any city. We have never yet succeeded in getting a mother to cooperate for the months and years it takes to correct this deformity. The baby cries, the cast gets wet and dirty, the exercises are too much trouble . . . and the child is destined to go through life on the outside of an ankle. If that is his fate, he will have to bear it. That this fate might have been altered by the exercise of a little will power, never seems to occur.

Accidents, injuries and burns are another fruitful source of permanent disability. Contractures of the hands, arms and legs, preventable by the most ordinary medical care and a little cooperation on the part of the patient, are very hard to correct afterwards. Many times we have tried to excise the scar tissue and graft new skin in its place, only to have the patient wander off to the village long before the treatment was complete. Stiff elbows, bent legs, claw hands, twisted necks—all might be helped, if the patient would only cooperate. Ignorance, fatalism, poverty, improvidence are sad handicaps in orthopedic care.

This woman can no longer stand erect. Osteomalacia is the cause of her deformity.

Tuberculosis and infantile paralysis cause terrible crippling. Here the cure is much more difficult, requiring real skill, training and experience on the part of the surgeon. India would be a paradise for young orthophedic specialists who would like to acquire experience. The average Indian hospital treats the hundreds of cases of Pott's disease, tuberculous hips and elbows, etc. by the simple expedient described on the charts as: "Patient plastered and discharged." Many of these patients could be treated adequately by rest, light therapy, operations, etc., and eventually be cured completely.

Any hospital equipped for real orthopedic work would soon fill its wards with dozens of these unfortunates. From such a center many well trained specialists could be sent out year after year to cover the country with a network of healing centers, where crippled children and adults could be brought back to real and normal living.

"He whose soul is flat—the sky
Will cave in on him by and by."
—Edna St. Vincent Millay

"- - And Golden Slippers"

by

Sister Alma Julia, S.C.M.M.

The Princess had on golden slippers—not glass like Cinderella's (How difficult they must have been to put on!) but a pliable fabric woven with gold thread with a green piping along the edges. The toes came to a point and curled up at the tip like the letter c. These were Turkish slippers such as the Jinn worn in "Arabian Nights," and a commonly used slipper in the Punjab.

"Do you like the slippers?" the Princess asked me.

"Yes," I said, "I think they are very beautiful."

"Do try them on," she said, as she slipped her feet out of them.

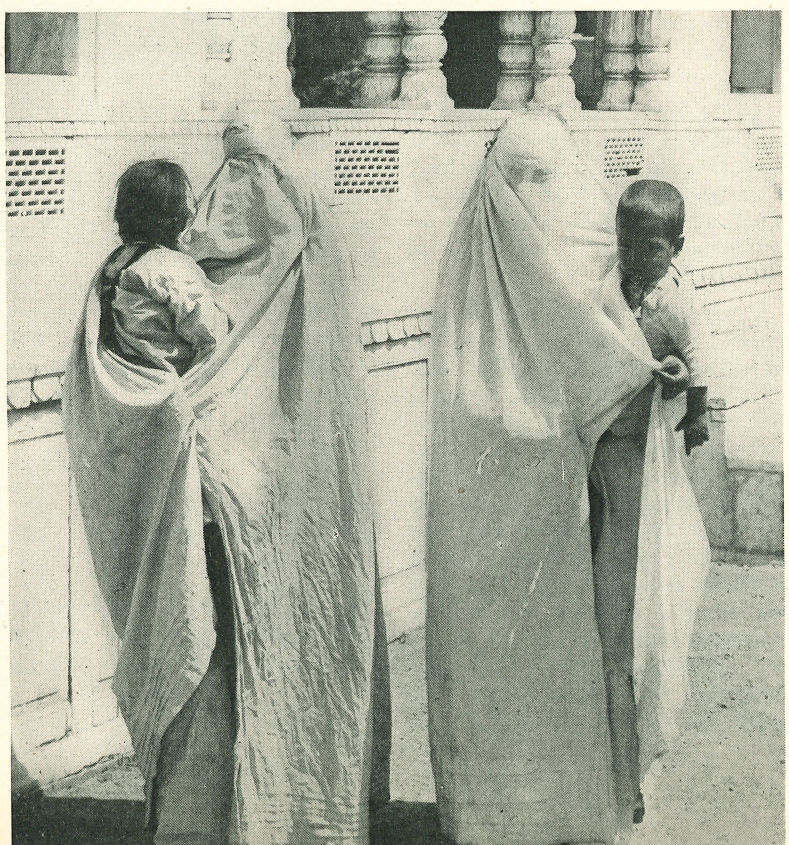
That was what I was longing to do. They fitted just right. I had on white stockings, so the golden slippers against my white habit looked quite otherwise than they did against her brown velvet skin. Now do not think they fitted me because my feet are so small. Not at all. It just happened that our feet are about the same size.

I was afraid the Princess might offer me the slippers—the tendency is to give a guest whatever she admires—so I hastened to say, "Of course, we couldn't wear anything like this in the hospital. We wear only white all the time. Besides, they wouldn't last long after one day up and down the cement corridors." I took them off and gave them back to her. It was easy enough to slip my feet in and out of my own Afghan sandals, the practical footwear most of us use. These are made especially for us in white in the native bazaars.

The Princess wore a Punjabi suit of lavender velvet brocade—full Turkish trousers, an overblouse reaching to the knees, and over all, thrown about head and shoulders, a thin veiling of a lighter shade of lavender silk.

But let me give you the setting.

Sister Alma had been called to see the Princess' daughter who was ill and she took me as a companion. I am quite used to the mud villages outside Rawalpindi, the brick houses of the poor and not so poor in this city, and have even entered some of the houses of the rich. But this was my first experience in visiting a palace belonging to one of the Punjab aristocracy. (In case you do not know, India includes within its borders hundreds of small, and a few large, native states, still ruled by their own princes and princesses. Even the British Province of the Punjab has within its borders several little independent states and estates still ruled by their own princes, or the equivalent in English of lords or barons.)



Mohammedan women keep strict purdah. When going out they must be heavily veiled.

This primitive spinning wheel, can be seen in half the homes in India.

We were sitting in the women's court, in the private room of the sick girl. The Princess set on the foot of the patient's bed while the above conversation was going on. Sister Alma sat on a chair near the head.

Just then the Princess' eldest daughter came in. She is married to a lord or baron having his estates perhaps within an hour's ride from her father's. Greetings followed, as she knew Sister Alma from former visits.

"Salaam, Doctor Sahiba," she said to Sister Alma.

"Salaam, Sister Sahiba," to me . . .

"When did you come?" Sister Alma asked her.

"Just last night."

Then she went on to tell what a time she had getting here. Her husband could not get enough gasoline for the car, so she hired a bus. She could not ride in a public bus, you know, being so very purdah, so she just got a bus for herself and came that way.

"What! You came all alone?" Sister Alma gasped. She knows how very, very purdah these Mussulman ladies are. No man, absolutely no man, except husband, father or brother ever sees their faces. No, not even the father-in-law. They are kept secluded in every way.

"Don't tell me you came **alone!**"

"Yes, just myself and the baby."

"Not even a servant?"

"Oh yes. Three servants. The baby's nurse, my maid-servant and a man-servant."

"Can't you see, Sister?" I put in. "She came all alone. She means she had the bus all to herself, she and the baby and the three servants."

But do not think the Princess' daughter broke purdah on that ride. Oh, no! The man-servant went ahead, hired the bus and hung up curtains all around the inside so no outsider could look in. Then the ladies, heavily veiled, got in and made the trip in seclusion. Most likely the man-servant sat with the bus-driver and gave directions until they drove safely into the enclosure of her father's palace.

The Princess' daughter also wore golden slippers like her mother's, and a similar Punjabi suit of light green velvet brocade and silken veil of lighter green tint.

"What do you do all day?" Sister Alma asked her.

"Nothing," she answered, and looked bored.

Then the nurse came in with the baby who was now in the walking-and-learning-to-talk stage. The nurse had lots of fun walking and talking to the baby, carrying him around and playing with him. She did not look the least bit bored.

At lunch time the nurse took us over to the palace where we ate in stately seclusion in the guest dining room. To get to the palace we had to walk across the women's court. This is a very large quadrangle surrounded on three sides by the women's apartments and quarters for the women servants. The fourth side is a ten foot wall separating the women's court from the grounds of the palace proper. In the center is a garden, several fruit trees and a few bushes. Near the vegetable garden an elderly lady was spinning on a primitive spinning wheel, such as can be seen in half the homes in India. A peacock perched on the wall flew away with a screech as we approached.

To go from the women's garden into the palace grounds we had to call to the guard on the other side to open the gate, as the locks and bolts are on the palace side.

After lunch Sister Alma and I walked around the palace grounds which are also surrounded by a ten-foot wall with guards at the gate. But here the palace is in the center and the gardens are all around it. The floors of the palace are pure marble, as are the floors of the verandahs and the walks of the garden.

"I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls
With vassals and serfs by my side . . ."

Well, there were marble halls here . . . and serfs too.

After lunch the Princess and her daughters (a younger one also joined us) came over to the palace to visit with us before we left. First a servant came and passed around word that the ladies and their attendants were coming. The

cooks and bearers and gardeners, even the guard himself, managed to get out of sight somewhere. The Princess and her daughters came, accompanied by their women servants, and we sat on the marble verandah. The servants brought fruit—oranges, apples, loquats, bananas — and silver knives.

It was rather difficult to make conversation, as the choice of subjects was limited. Looking at the half-acre of marble floor on the verandah, Sister Alma said: "Wouldn't this make a lovely roller-skating rink."

Then we tried to explain to the ladies what roller skates were and how they were used. The Lady Sahiba, the eldest daughter, said she had seen a picture of ice-skating. Of course the girls had seen ice, in fact they had an electric refrigerator in the palace, which made ice-cubes. And perhaps their father had taken them for a ride to see the snow and ice in winter, at least when they were children, since they were within an hour's ride from the mountains where snow fell.

When they were small, I recalled, they were not in purdah. Therefore their father could take them to places outside the walls—to his villages when touring them, and to his farms and orchards. Perhaps they even saw a movie when he happened to have them with him in a large place like Rawalpindi. But at the age of twelve they had to go into purdah and stay within the walls, or stay veiled if outside the walls.

I wonder if they sometimes envied the poor village children making mud-pies down by the river or riding astride the camels when they were bringing in wood from the hills, or minding the goats along the village roads.

Speaking of roller-skating, I mentioned that I thought it would be good exercise for the younger daughter (about fourteen years of age) who sat back silently during our talks, never making a comment.

"She has a bicycle," the Princess said. "And she rides it around the grounds."

We told them that we rode bicycles even now, around the city to see patients and on business.

The Princess seemed amused at it all, but appeared well satisfied with her lot. She was brought up that way. She was used to it —and resigned.

But the younger daughter sat there—bored.

What was she thinking? I wanted to get inside her mind, but she did not respond. She listened to our frivolous conversation but made no comments. I tried to draw her out, but she answered in the fewest words consistent with courtesy.

Did she mind these prison walls, I asked myself. What makes a prison? If one has all the beautiful clothes one wants, plenty of jewels, rose gardens, marble floors, even a radio and electric conveniences—is it still a prison?

"Stone walls do not a prison make . . ."

"Yes," I told myself. "It is a prison. Even if the bars were of gold it would still be a prison."

When the ladies left us and the bolts slipped into place again before the chauffeur came to drive us back to Rawalpindi, we took a last look.

"Wouldn't it make a nice cloister?" suggested Sister Alma.

"That's it," I thought. "If the east reception room were turned into a chapel and nuns took possession it would no longer be a prison but a bit of paradise."

You see, if it were a cloister the bolts and locks would be on the inside instead of on the outside to keep the ladies in. What a difference!

But on second thought, I did not think it would make a good cloister after all. Even if the French furniture were thrown out and the Persian rugs left only in the chapel, there remained the marble floors. But still something was wrong. The architecture was not right for a cloister. And, of course, a cloister would not be out in the wilderness like that. It would be in a town or city where people could drop into the chapel now and then to say a prayer.

Anyway, it was nice to get back to the hospital where one has something to do. Here there is no time to be bored. And that night I said an extra prayer of thanks that I was not a Mussulman princess.

GOD AND HIS MOTHER

You cannot visit the child without visiting the mother; you cannot in common human life approach the child except through the mother. If we are to think of Christ in this aspect at all, the other idea follows as it is followed in history. We must either leave Christ out of Christmas, or Christmas out of Christ, or we must admit, if only as we admit it in an old picture, that those holy heads are too near together for the haloes not to mingle and cross.

—G. K. CHESTERTON, in *The Everlasting Man.*

The Mission Clipper

"DRUGSTORE" IN BOLIVIA

Many a remote village of Bolivia, notes a recent issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, has never known a doctor or a drugstore. Medicine-men or witch-doctors still carry on their trade. The profession is usually passed on from father to son. Carrying his "drugstore" in a bag, the "doctor" comes to the sick man's house bringing leaves, roots, bulbs, seeds and barks.

Fortunately, some of the remedies are quite efficient. It was some of these practitioners who, according to records, were the first to use cinchona bark in the treatment of malaria. Many other drugs used by them have been officially accepted by modern pharmacologists, among them the leaves of the Erythroxylon coca, the "divine plant of the Incas," which is the source of cocaine.

APPEAL FOR MISSIONARIES—CHINA

Appealing for missionaries of all nations to come to China, Bishop Yu Pin, Vicar Apostolic of Nanking, said recently—"I appeal to the entire Catholic world to send out its pioneers and conquer new fields for Christ in China.

"Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek has already appealed to missionaries the world over to come and work for our people.

"Although numerically less than one-tenth of the population, we Catholics are well aware of our responsibility on the threshold of a new era. Missionaries have always been welcome and will be doubly so now. Republican China has never hindered their work, and today the need for their work is greater than ever.

"We are far from being wildly Nationalist. Missionaries from former enemy countries are as welcome as all others. To us they are heralds of the all-embracing Church and teachers of the Eternal Truth.

"This appeal is to laymen as well as the clergy. Intellectuals and specialists will find a field of activity here."

You cannot kill game by looking at it.—African proverb.

INDIAN CATHOLICS SEEK PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

A federal tribunal, modeled after the United States Supreme Court, to protect rights of religious minorities of India, was demanded by the President of the Catholic Union, M. Ruthnaswamy, at a meeting of Catholics in Poona.

Fundamental rights, such as freedom of conscience, right to conversion, and right of Christian marriage and education are at stake and must be made statutory in the future constitution of India, the President declared.

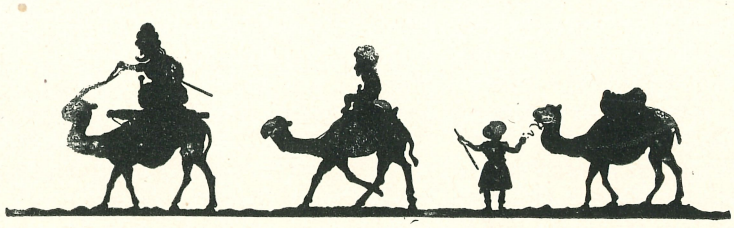
CATHOLICS IN UGANDA

In 1939 Catholics in Uganda showed the amazing total of 652,282 with another 120,099 under instruction. Today the number has passed the 700,000 mark, which means that about 18.5 percent of Uganda's population is now Catholic. It will not be many years before the percentage of Catholic Blacks in Uganda reaches the percentage of Catholics in the United States.

Altogether there are now working in the Uganda missions more than 300 missionaries, of whom 80 are native priests. They are assisted by 250 foreign and 350 native sisters. Of 110 brothers, 60 are African. In addition there are over 6,000 catechists and schoolteachers.

THE TAU CROSS AND HEALING

During the plague epidemics of the 17th century, crosses in the form of the Greek letter **tau** were worn frequently under the name of St. Anthony crosses. The tau was a sacred symbol in ancient Egypt. St. Anthony, who was a Copt, an Egyptian Christian, made the tau his badge. Later it also became the badge of the Antonites, who devoted themselves to the nursing of skin diseases. Hence its connection with the plague and healing.—**Ciba Symposium**



One Talent - - Not Buried

by

Sister M. Dolores, S.C.M.M., R.N.

If Ram Nath had been born in the U.S.A. instead of in India he might have become a big business man, an engineer, or perhaps a bank president. But here, as a good Hindu, he can never hope to be anything but a caste sweeper, the class to which he belongs. He never learned to read. He must sign receipts with his thumb print. Naturally his parents could not afford to send him to school, or even if they could what school in his time would take a sweeper among its students. The rest of the student body would have walked out. Defiled!

For the past fifteen years or more, almost since the beginning of Holy Family Hospital, Ram Nath has been a hospital sweeper. But sweeping wards, scrubbing corridors and cleaning up the compound is monotonous work and Ram Nath knows that he has the intelligence for better things. At least he knows that any diversion is preferable that allows him to neglect his broom.

The white-washer comes to do the hospital walls. Ram Nath holds the ladder, stirs up the mixture, and the next thing you know he can tell you where to get the lime, the price, how it should be applied and almost anything in the line of white-washing. When another bit of white-washing is needed, Ram Nath is called to take care of it. He goes to the bazaar, buys and mixes his materials and applies them successfully. You can feel his pride as he does the job while someone else is asked to hold the ladder.

When the electricians come to fix or test the bells or lights, Ram Nath neglects his broom again and "assists" them. The next time a bell or light is out of order, Ram Nath will probably be able to remedy it. It is the same with the carpenter, the painter or any other repair man.

At first we would send Ram Nath back to his sweeping. Why should he be wasting his time hanging around and offering his help each time a workman came into the hospital! But gradually we found it paid to let him alone. After observing once or twice Ram Nath usually was able to do the work. And of course, simple jobs of carpentering always fell to his lot.

Not only did Ram Nath keep his eyes open as far as the workmen were concerned. Apparently he watched the work of the doctors and nurses and decided they were capable. One day he brought his wife to the pre-natal clinic. Would he allow her to come to a Christian hospital? We wondered. But when the day came, just as Sister was leaving the admitting room, Ram Nath appeared with his wife and said, "Sister ji, case aya . . ." (A case has come)

Since then Ram Nath's wife has had all her children here—five so far, lovely, healthy children.

One of the things Ram Nath will not do is brush down the birds' nests when the birds start building them in the wards. The ward ceilings are high with exposed iron girders which make nice sheltered places for the birds to build. But as Ram Nath is a good Hindu and believes it possible that some of his ancestors might be reincarnated he will take no chance on killing them.

"There are babies in the nests," he will say . . . and remains firm in refusing to knock them down.

Not long ago Ram Nath announced that he was going to leave. Since he had said the same periodically and had not carried out his threat, no one paid any attention to him. His grievance this time was about the regulation uniforms worn by the sweepers. The past winter in Rawalpindi was said to be the coldest in forty years. It was decided therefore, to provide the servants with long trousers instead of the usual knee length ones they had been wearing. This attempt to make them more comfortable was received enthusiastically by all except Ram Nath. He did not like the style selected! The real reason may have been that as head boss of the sweepers he had not been consulted.

When the other sweepers appeared with their new suits, at least looking warmer than when their spindly legs were exposed to the cold biting wind, Ram Nath, with an "I don't care" attitude, wore his old shorts. By evening he weakened and sent a go-between to Sister Nicola to ask for some clothes. But he received the answer that he must come and ask for them himself.

Then Ram Nath announced that he was going to quit as he had no clothes to wear.

At the end of a week he went to Sister Nicola to say that he was really going now. It was evident that he did not want to go but was looking for a chance to stay without diminishing his prestige too much. Sister Nicola was not anxious to lose so valuable

a servant either so she too tried to make it easy for him to withdraw his resignation.

"It's your own fault," Sister said, "You could have had new clothes like the others." It was an opening.

"Yes, I need some clothes. I am very dirty." The parley ended. Ram Nath appeared the next morning with long trousers.

Until a few years ago Ram Nath would not go inside our hospital chapel. Was he afraid his gods would be jealous? Or afraid of the unknown God in this Christian place of prayer? Whatever the reason, his attitude gradually changed. The first concession came when he had to carry in some heavy plants for around the Christmas Crib. True, he did not loiter within, but hastily set down the plants and rushed out with jerky glances backward to see if he was being pursued. Nothing happened. Or did something happen? Perhaps the Spirit there did cast a beam of light into the darkness.

LITERAL TRANSLATION

Some everyday Urdu expressions, literally translated:

"My heart sat down"—meaning, I lost heart.

"Apply your heart"—that is, work diligently.

"Apply your ears"—or in other words, listen attentively!

Most likely Ram Nath will die a good Hindu. But Ram Nath's children are going to school now. They are not afraid of the sisters, nor of the chapel. When we have the Christmas party for the orphans and servants' children they come with the others and get their share of apples and buns and presents and run in and out with the others to see the Christmas Crib. Some day they may learn what it is all about. Our hopes lie with the next generation.

I have a suspicion that Ram Nath will end his days in the service of Holy Family Hospital.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of:

Rt. Rev. Monsignor Robert J. Achstetter, Baltimore, Md.

Sister M. Agnes, Baden, Pa.

Sister M. Nicola, Cornwells, Pa.

Mr. John A. Green, Council Bluffs, Iowa (Father of Sister M. Regina, S.C.M.M.)

Mr. John J. McCue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

News From Home and Abroad

MERRY CHRISTMAS! This is the wish and thought of the Medical Mission Sisters for all the friends who have been so kind and generous throughout the year. Many thousands of miles separate us, but wherever we may be—America, India, England or Holland—we shall be united in praying that peace, happiness and joy—in the Christ Child—may be yours this Christmastide and throughout the coming year.

AT HOME

The news of the month comes from home this time, from our motherhouse in Philadelphia, to be exact. It is the purchase of an old home and adjoining land directly opposite our present house in Fox Chase. The need for more room seems to be proverbial among the Medical Missionaries. The new house will relieve the situation—really a crowded one—by providing a home for the novices and postulants. May they be ever on the increase!

"Ury House", as the home is called, is believed to be the oldest house in Pennsylvania. The original foundation was an old Swedish blockhouse, erected in 1645. This was added to throughout the years, to make the present house. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, John J. Audubon and other famous figures of Colonial days visited the home. The Crawford family, from whom the property was purchased, have owned and lived in the house since 1814 and gave it the name "Ury House."

INDIA

PATNA

In far-away Patna Sister M. Elise is hoping to meet Santa with a whole sledfull of hospital equipment. She writes: "During the war I had a chance to see the American Military Hospital at Gaya, as I helped to take a very sick priest there. If only we could get their equipment now that the war is over—first class X-ray unit, operating room table and lights, lab equipment, iceboxes, physical therapy machine, etc. I had almost forgotten what an American hospital looks like and how much more can be done for patients than we are able to do at present."

Beyond compare

And she adds on behalf of the babies—"How would you like to nurse an eight-month old baby with smallpox, famine edema all over, five incisions to let out the excess fluid, two dislocated joints, diarrhea, bronchopneumonia and a hemoglobin of 30%?

You cannot even imagine the kind of cases we get here—bled out, starved to death, or covered with infected burns, or with fevers of 108 degrees due to malaria. Such patients often take a special nurse all day long; that is one of the reasons why they come to us. We have 33 student nurses for 150 beds, while the general hospital has only 75 for 1000 cases! There just isn't anything in the U.S. that can compare with the need over here."

But they rejoice

But with it all there is much cause for rejoicing. For instance—"Our chapel is getting fuller every Sunday. Last Sunday, besides the 33 student nurses and many Christian patients there were also fifteen carpenters from Bettiah. The latter work on boats on the Ganges. Then there is the ever-growing crowd of non-Christian patients and their relatives. They love the ceremonies and follow them with wide-open eyes. In fact, as soon as the organ starts to play, everyone in the hospital who can possibly walk gets up and comes to the chapel for 'puja.' Some wrap bed sheets around them, or blankets in the cold season. We smile as they trail ceremoniously in front of our priedieus to salaam us first and then turn to the Lord!"

Competition

"In Patna we now have competition with our name—Holy Family Hospital. Across the street a new hotel opened up where the relatives of the patients stay with their whole household when they come in from the villages. The hotel adopted the name of Pabitir Hotel, or Holy Hotel—undoubtedly to draw more customers. It is certainly filled all the time."

RAWALPINDI

There are presents and presents—and not just for Christmas either. Our patients have delightful ways of saying 'thank you' with flowers and . . . Sister Leonie writes: "The husband of one of our patients has been bringing us gifts. One day he brought a beautiful bouquet of flowers for Our Lady. There is a lovely Madonna and Child in the hall. That was very well—and then! The next day he brought a very ornate mirror and put it on top of the chart desk. 'For you,' he said to Sister Damian—and did not understand why Sister was so happy with the flowers but could not use the mirror."

About the Sikhs

One of our student nurses belongs to the Sikhs, one of the religious sects of India. Sister Damian writes: "The Sikhs do not cut their hair, believing they will not be allowed to enter heaven with cut hair. The little boys look like girls and some have very long hair. As soon as they are of age, they put up their hair and wear a kind of headdress made from a long thin piece of material. They always wear this, together with all that amount of hair, even in the worst heat. The Hindus have a kind of joke that it is no use to ask advice from a Sikh at noon in the very hot summer because he has lost his senses for a while on account of the heat and the hair.

"The student I was writing about is very well educated and is very friendly with all the others. They are all Christians, but she goes with them to church and says her own prayers."

Cholera epidemic

Rawalpindi is having its annual epidemic of cholera. Sister Alma Julia writes: "We have given hundreds of cholera injections in our hospital dispensary this past week. Prevention is better than cure. We are fortunate in having plenty of cholera vaccine available. We have cholera more or less with us all the time in this part of the world, along with typhus, plague and other things.

DACCA

There have been several Burmese patients in the Mitford Hospital in Dacca, and Sister Margaret Mary has discovered the chief Burmese likes—tea and cigars! "We have had Burmese civilians here," she writes, "and although we cannot speak a common language the conditions spoke much. There are two things a Burmese man or woman likes—tea and cigars. Yesterday two of us went to a hospital next door and handed out good Burma cigars to about thirty men and women. His Excellency, the late Bishop Crowley of Dacca, was responsible for the gift. The hospital we visited is one of the two emergency hospitals built for the overflow from the Mitford. We have 300 patients and more instead of 260 and these emergency hospitals combined have 170 instead of 150, so we are full up."

Bengali Sisters

Sister Jude adds some good news with: "The Bengali Sisters whom we trained in Rawalpindi are doing exceptionally fine maternity work in the villages. They have several centers and go out day and night on calls. They are building a small maternity home at Toomiliah, which will be opened soon. Two of the Bengali Sisters have gone to our hospital in Patna, to take nurses' training."

MARY GIRI

It isn't snow—but rain and more rain—in Mary Giri. Sister Pauline tells us they are almost out at sea with all the rain. "We are on a little knoll," she writes, "and looking over the rice fields it seems we are on the ocean for this is the heavy monsoon and the backwaters are up over the fields. Sometimes it rains for eight to ten days straight. As for our washing, it just piles up. Otherwise we keep Our Lady busy and hang her scapular on the line. It usually works too! Sometimes the sun shines—and then, just when you get everything out to dry from every corner of the house, the sun suddenly disappears and in an instant there is a terrific downpour!"

Beggar saint

"On the feast of St. Alexius, the beggar saint, we thought he came to visit us. For Holy Mass a poor man came and assisted very reverently. Just after the Elevation he sang a lovely song to the Blessed Sacrament. The altar boy quickly hushed him up. I was sorry because it was so nice—but I suppose St. Alexius was also treated like that."

Sister John—drawing water

OVERHEARD ON WARD ROUNDS

Doctor: "That broken hip of yours is getting along famously. In another month you may be able to leave the hospital."

Ghulam: "But Doctorji, I must go home today! My only goat is ill and has no one to look after her. I really must go home today."

Doctor: "But how can you do that?"

Ghulam: "Four of my neighbors will carry me home on my string bed. Furthermore, God will look after me and if I should break the other hip, I'll be back again."

(Believe it or not, she WAS back within a year with a fracture on the opposite side).

Malabar novices gathering cocoanuts. Micky, the goat, rushed in at the last moment.

The Holy Father's Mission Intention for December:

DEEP CATHOLIC CONCERN FOR THE MOHAMMEDAN MISSIONS.

+ Greeting +

E SALUTE YOU. We are your friends and our wish for you goes deep. There is nothing we can give you which you have not got; but there is much, very much, that while we cannot give it, you can take it. No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in today. Take Heaven! No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instance. Take Peace! The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach is joy. There is radiance and glory in the darkness, could we but see—and to see we have only to look. We beseech you to look. Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering and you will find beneath it a living splendour, woven of love, by wisdom, with power. Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the Angel's hand that brings it to you. Everywhere we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty, that Angel's hand is there; the gift is there, and the wonder of an overshadowing Presence. Our joys too: be not content with them as joys. They, too, conceal diviner gifts. Life is so full of meaning and purpose, so full of beauty—beneath its covering—that you will find earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage then to claim it; that is all! But courage you have; and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending, through unknown country, home. . . . And so, at this Christmas time, we greet you. Not quite as the world sends greetings, but with profound esteem and with the prayer that for you now and forever, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away.

Adapted from a letter written by Fra Giovanni—A.D. 1513
Christmas initial, John Stevens, Newport